

# International shipping traffic as a determinant of the developing advertising press: a case study of 18<sup>th</sup> century Ghent

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## Abstract

In this article, we examine the advertising section in the three-daily chronicle of Ghent between 1706 and 1800. We contribute to the research field by adding a new case study and by studying the link with the maritime situation as a determinant of the evolving advertising sections. It is established that the advertising section changed drastically in terms of quantity and structure in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as it developed into a commercial medium that was characterised by orderliness and easiness to consult. The nature of the offered goods and Granger-causality tests indicate that it was plausible that the internationalising trade was a determinant of these evolutions.

## Introduction

Consumption and retailing became popular research topics among economic historians during the last three decades. An important milestone for the interest in these areas was the publication of *The Birth of a consumer society* in 1982. McKendrick, Plumb and Brewer opened their study by stating: '*there was a consumer revolution in eighteenth century England. More men and women than ever before in human history enjoyed the experience of acquiring material possessions*' (McKendrick, Brewer & Plumb, 1982). To study these changes, the authors used the advertising sections in 18<sup>th</sup> century English newspapers. They concluded that consumptive patterns changed and stated that the methods of advertising evolved from informative into commercial. Based on this, the authors believe that retailers developed their skills and became commercial specialists throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As such, the study laid the fundamentals of two concepts that are still common knowledge among economic historians: the consumer and the retail revolution.

An important aspect of the retail revolution is that local merchants developed into commercial specialists and explored new ways to attract potential customers. The upcoming and developing use of advertising has often been seen as proof of this. The topic was first picked up by British authors. Examples besides McKendrick et. al. (1982) were: Raven (1993), Ferdinand (1993), Fowless (1996), Gieszinger (2000), Walsh (2000), Wischerman (2000), Gotti (2005) and Morgan (2006). They concluded that the advertising section changed not only in terms of the contents of the ads, but also in terms of the structure, the discourse and the used commercial skills. Although the studies were not that numerous, the same results were obtained for the Netherlands, France and Germany. Examples are Coquery (2004), Görlach (2002) and Retat (2001). On advertising in the Southern Netherlands, most research is more dated (Examples are De Potter, 1879; Gaus, 1966; Van Aerde, 1932). For Antwerp, there is a more recent study on the role of advertisements in the retailing business (Lyna & Van Damme, 2009).

Although there is discussion on the precise timing, all these studies have in common that they accept the changing nature of the advertising section in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Less is known about the determinants of the changing advertising section. One question that is

still open for discussion is whether it was caused by a demand or by a supply-side shock. The former entails that advertising was a reaction to the changing consumption pattern in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this view, retailers reacted to the observed changes in fashion and materialism by using promotional media. The intuition behind the latter is that the changing advertising habits were a consequence of the economic and industrial development. Other authors highlighted the importance of the democratisation of the printing press and the dropped transaction cost (Lyna & Vandamme, 2009).

It is our intuition that the case study of Ghent offers indications for the importance of exogenous supply shocks as main determinants of the developing advertising press. There were two important shocks in the studied time period. Firstly, there was the economic policy of the Austrian government from the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) onwards, which resulted in a better customs system, a renewed attention for road- and water transport and in a developing international trading pattern. A second shock was the American Independency War (1775-1783). As the Southern Netherlands remained neutral, the port of Ostend attracted lots of traders in those years. Because of this, the shipping traffic shifted from France and England to the Southern Netherlands. Both events favoured the trading pattern of the Southern Netherlands, as it became more and more internationally oriented. In this article, we study what impact this had on the developments in the advertising section.

To study the link between the development of the advertising section and the maritime situation of the Southern Netherlands, we need data on the advertising press and on the shipping traffic. Because of this, our choice for 18<sup>th</sup> century Ghent as a case study was a logical one. First of all, the city was an important economic centre. Although it stood in the shadow of Antwerp for a long time, it gained economic power throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, the available data make it possible to compose a rather continuous dataset. Besides data on the advertisements, the newspapers of Ghent also offered specific information on the shipping traffic in the harbour of Ostend from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Our article is structured as follows. In the first section, we present the used data and the methodology. This is followed by the results, which are split into two sections. As we want to demonstrate the causal relation between the shipping traffic and the changes in advertising, we first need to check whether the ads in the newspapers of Ghent witnessed a similar evolution as the national and international counterparts. We do this by studying the quantitative and qualitative evolution of the advertising section. Building on those results, we demonstrate that it is plausible that the internationalising trading pattern was a determinant of the changing advertising section. We finish with the conclusion, where some discussion points are suggested.

## **Data and methodology**

### ***Data***

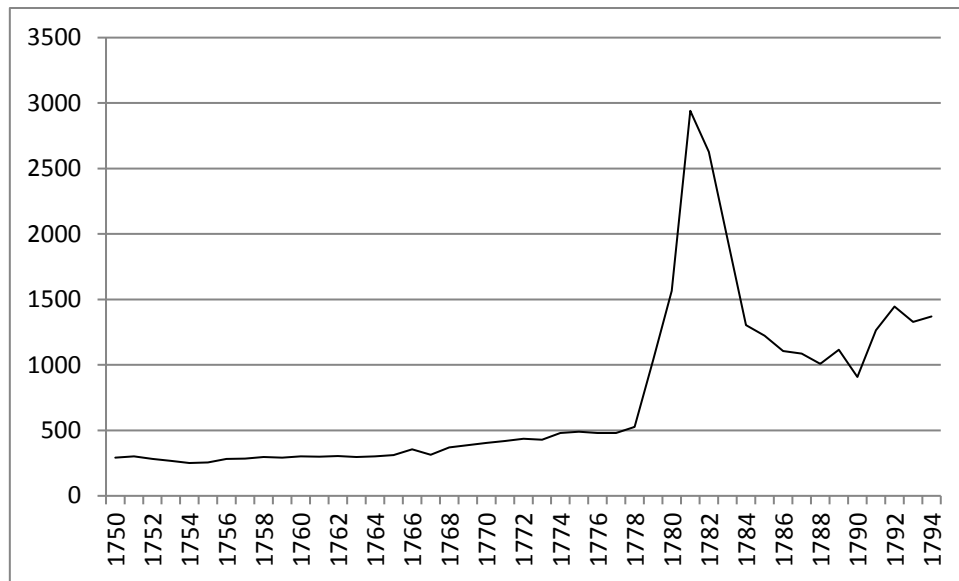
For this article, we needed a dataset that covered the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As the advertising press only started to develop as a separated medium at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we use the ads that were included in the regular newspapers (the first official form of an advertising section). These newspapers were founded all over the European continent in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Ghent, it was Maximiliaan Graet who received the privilege at 17 November 1666 to print the *Ghendtsche Post-Tijdinghen*. Although the name changed a couple of times, the paper would be printed until 1940. As such, the development of the printed press in the Southern Netherlands seems to follow the international evolutions (Walsh, 2000).

By studying these advertising sections, we composed a dataset that contains 6149 ads and covers the period between 1706 and 1800 (no data could be found before 1706). For the first part of the article, we followed the suggestions of Clair Walsh and selected ten yearly samples (Walsh, 2000). Because of missing newspapers, we had to adjust our sample. The years 1706, 1719 and 1737 were selected instead of 1700, 1720 and 1730. To establish the link with the shipping traffic, we selected yearly data for the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As such, we composed a dataset containing all newspapers of the following years: 1706, 1710, 1719, 1737, 1740, 1750-1800. Only the advertisements of professional merchants were withheld. For these, we wrote down the name of the merchant or shop, the offered goods and the formal characteristics.

To establish the link with the maritime situation, we needed data on the shipping traffic. The port of Antwerp was not important in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (the Scheldt was closed until 1795) and the other harbours only started to grow in the beginning of the nineteenth century. We therefore focused on the development of the port of Ostend. The data of the incoming ships mainly come from the research of Daniel Farasyn who studied the harbour of Ostend between 1769 and 1793 (Farasyn, 1998). For the earlier years, we could only reconstruct the shipping traffic from 1749 onwards based on the information in the newspapers of Ghent. We found confirmation for these figures in the unpublished thesis of Margareta Devos, who also studied the shipping traffic for Ostend in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Devos, 1970). We only use our data for the years 1749-1768, as the information in the newspapers of Ghent is not as detailed as in the research of Farasyn (1998).

It is not possible to obtain figures on the maritime situation before 1750. This is not problematic for our research, as it is a still standing view among economic historians that the harbour only flourished after 1750. This is confirmed by Farasyn, who stated that Ostend initially was merely a transit harbour that suffered a lot from the abolishment of the East-Indian Company in 1731 (Farasyn, 1998). The unimportance of the port was mainly caused by the lack of industry and transport infrastructure and by the inability of the local government to wield political pressure. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) was a turning point, as the Austrian government implemented an economic policy that was aimed at economic development. Ostend was benefited by this in terms of an expanding road and canal-network and by continual infrastructural works throughout the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This had an important impact on the shipping traffic, as can be seen in figure 1. The peak from 1778 till 1783 can be explained by the American Independency War (1775-1783). The Southern Netherlands remained neutral and attracted lots of traders in those years. This not only had an impact on the amount of ships, but also on the trading pattern. Before 1775, it were mainly ships coming from France, England and the Netherlands that entered the harbour. After that, ships also came from Spain, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Scotland, USA, Argentina, Central-America and the Far East. The nature of the shipped products also changed, as it were not longer mainly basic goods but more and more luxurious and colonial goods that were imported (Farasyn, 1998; Coenen, 2013).

Figure 1. Shipping traffic in the harbour of Ostend in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

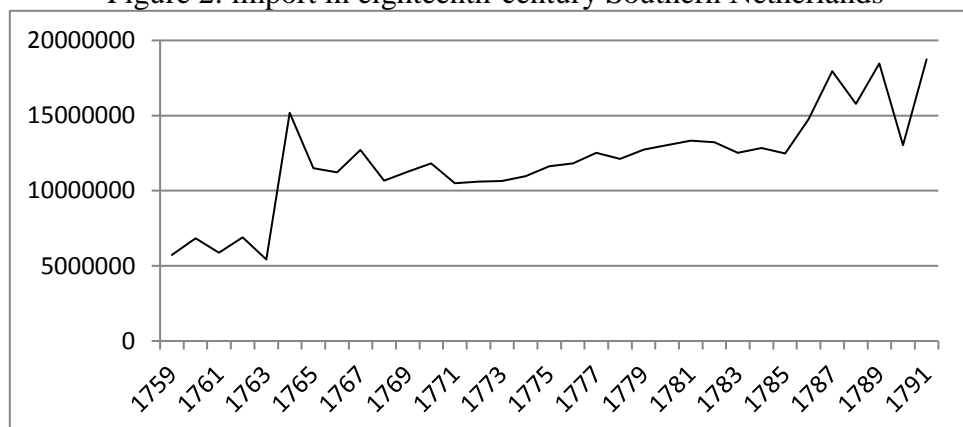


Source: own research, Farasyn (1998)

Figure 1 shows that the shipping traffic decreased after the Independency War. It remained at a higher level though than before 1775. The period of economic development was stopped in the 1790s. The region was confronted with the revolutions of Brabant and Liège and the first and the second French occupation. The war stopped the positive flow and lead to the dislocation of factories, a major economic downfall and a stagnating shipping traffic.

As a robustness test, we needed alternative data for the shipping traffic. For this, we are grateful to Ann Coenen, who provided us with the data of her unpublished PHD dissertation in which she studied the import and export pattern of the Southern Netherlands for the period 1759 till 1791. For this article we are mainly interested in her data on imports. She composed these data based on the *Relevés Généraux Des Marchandises, Manufactures et Denrées Entrées, Sorties et Transitées* (Coenen, 2013). These statistics were collected by the customs administration from 1759 until 1791 give a valuable insight into the trading pattern of the Southern Netherlands. We used the aggregated import data to check whether the link between shipping traffic and the advertisement press remained intact when the former was replaced with the data of Ann Coenen (2013), of which figure 2 gives an overview.

Figure 2: import in eighteenth-century Southern Netherlands



SOURCE: Coenen (2013)

### Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction, the first part of the analysis has a descriptive character. The second part is more quantitative. In the first step of the quantitative analysis, ordinary least square regressions (OLS) are used to regress the shipping traffic on the amount of advertisements. We repeat this using the import figures as a robustness test.

As a significant relation between the two variables is not enough to conclude a causal relation, we check for causality in a twofold manner. Firstly, we will replace the contemporary shipping traffic with the lagged ones (lags of 2 and of 5 years) to check if we obtain higher coefficients that are more significant. The intuition is that the merchants didn't react immediately to the changed maritime situation, but adjusted after a couple of years.

Secondly, we test for Granger causality. With this test, we can examine the nature of the relation between the two variables. The intuition is that it investigates whether the lagged values of one variable help in explaining the other one. The test statistic is calculated from the sum of squared residuals (RSS) of the unrestricted and the restricted equation (Hamilton, 1994). The null hypothesis is that the one variable (*shipping traffic*) does not Granger-cause the other variable (*ads*). The intuition is that *shipping traffic* Granger-causes *advertising* if this last variable can be better predicted when we include the past values of *shipping traffic*. As we want to establish a causal relation between the two, we have to check if this null hypothesis can be rejected. It is important to rule out bidirectional causality and establish unidirectional causality, to be sure that shipping traffic causes merchants but not vice versa. This is why we also substitute the variables and test the impact of the past values of merchants on the prediction of the shipping traffic. As a robustness test, we repeat this analysis but replace the amount of ads with the amount of merchants and the amount of advertised goods.

As said, we test for Granger causality by comparing a restricted with an unrestricted model that tests the relation between shipping traffic (S) and advertisements (A). The difference between the two models is that in the last one, the lagged values of shipping traffic are included (Gujarati, 2003).

The restricted model can be written as:

$$A_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{j=1}^m \alpha_j A_{t-j} + u_t \quad (1) ;$$

The unrestricted model in its turn is formulated as:

$$A_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^m \beta_j A_{t-j} + \sum_{i=1}^n \gamma_i S_{t-i} + v_t \quad (2) ;$$

As the Granger-causality test is sensitive to the amount of lags that are included in the model (Gujarati, 2003), we use the Hannan-Quinn information criteria (HQIC) to check what the optimal amount of included lags is<sup>1</sup>. We use these optimal amount of lags to calculate the F values, using the following formula (Gujarati, 2003):

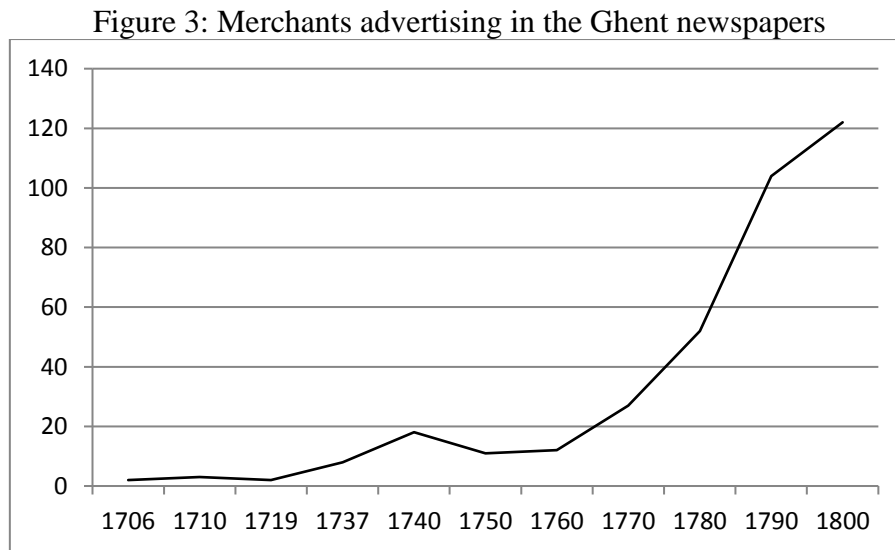
$$F = \frac{(RSS_R - RSS_{UR})/m}{RSS_{UR}/(n - k)} \quad (3) ;$$

where m is equal to the number of lagged years and k is the number of parameters that is estimated. R and UR stand for the restricted and the unrestricted formulation.

## Results

### *Development of the advertising section*

The quantitative growth of the advertising section can be illustrated by the increasing amount of merchants that used the medium. Figure 3 gives an overview of this evolution. As stated in the introduction, advertising started slow in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is only from 1750 onwards that the number of ads rose sharply.



<sup>1</sup> The HQC for model selection is measured as:  $HQC = n \log \left( \frac{RSS}{n} \right) + 2 k \log \log n$

This quantitative growth had an impact on the formal appearance of the advertising section. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate this. These figures respectively show a typical advertising section in 1711 and in 1800 (the ads can be found on the left of the bold black line).

Figure 4. Advertising section in the newspaper of Ghent in 1711

ken, sulx dat hy niet voor in't laetste van de toekomende weke alhier te ghemoot  
ghelien worde. De Oorloghschepen van't Elquader van den Vice-Admiraal Pieter Jon  
naer de Middelandische Zee gedestineert, voorleden Donderdagh uyt de Maes uyt  
ghelopen, ghelooft men dat giffen oft den voorighen dagh op de Rendevons tot  
Portsmouth nevens andere Schepen sullen ghearriveert zijn. Meest alle daenwe  
sende Uythemische Ministers waeren naer het arrivement van den voorleyden Mar  
quis de Colmenero by den Keyserlijcken Ambassadeur den Grave van Stozendorf,  
den welcken nevens den Envoyé den Baron de Marny, den Lord Troward, Ambas  
sadeur van Groet Brittanien, ende andere Ministers nevens de Heeren Haere Hoogh  
Moghende Ghedepueteerden in de Treves Kamer, met den Heere Palmquist Envoyé  
van Sweden in Conferentie zijn gheweest, ende giffen middagh met den Grave  
van Werthern ende den Baron van Geroldt Ministers van Polen soo gheseyt wort  
over de faecken van de Neutraleyteit in het Noorden.  
*Brussel den 13. Januarij.*  
**A**lhier is een omstandigh Relais den 19. December leestleden door den Lieute  
nant Generael den Baron d'Uffelbach aen den Churvorst Palatin van de op den  
Konink Philippus door den Generael Grave van Scharnbergh den 10. van de sel  
ve Maendt bevochten Victorie van Barcelona ghesonden, door den Druck gemeen  
ghemaect, ende moghen staet men noch een voorbet gemeconfantioneert Verhael  
in Druck uyt te gheven. Oock zijn alhier menighe Brieven daer een conform, ende  
seght men heden oft moghen avonds daer over het Canon te sullen worden geloft.  
*Ghede den 15. Januarij.*  
**M**en heeft alhier met groote verwonderinghe ghehoert 't geene de Franckse Gae  
sette ghedruckt tot Parijs den 1. deser maendts in't Article van Roumen van da  
ten 6. December 1710., ten oplichte van Sijnne Eminencie den Cardinael de Bouillon  
ghescreven heeft, want het selver article getuins met te waerheyt en kan be  
staen, door dien de Electie waer in Sijnne Eminencie in de Abdye van St. Amand op  
den 14. October leestleden voor wienmen Abt is verkoft, ghekieert is niet alle de  
Voeten van de Religieusen, nyghenomen eenen alleen, Canonieckijck ende sonder  
van iemand daer toe ghedwongen gheweest te zijn, ende de Aentique bewijken  
de selve Electie concenterende, alleenlijck met eenen voortnemen Persoon van Ant  
werpen veruocken, en is op den 1. December kitteden, ende selfs als noch niet en  
kan ghearriveert weien tot Roumen, door dien de Brieven van Linden van den 13.  
December mede brengen dat hy maer eerst op Kersavondt tot Maaenen en stont  
te arriveeren, om naer de Festdaghen naer Roumen te veruocken, dien heeft alhier  
de aenghenamen tijdinghe ontfangen van de Victorie bevochten door den Gene  
rael Scharnbergh op het Legher van de Vyanden, waer in sy gheoortweide zijn  
gheweest het Veldt te verlaeten mit verlies van alle kin Canon, 7. i. 8000. doode  
ende ghequettel, ende 4000. ghevanghen; het verlies van onsen kant: maer beloo  
gende tusschen de twee oft dry duysent Mannen.  
**WAERSCHOUWINGHE.**  
By ons is ghedruckt ende wordt verkocht: *Extrait uyt het Relais ghesonden van  
Barcelona den 19. December 1710. aen Sijnne Hoogheijt den Churvorst van den Palts  
door Sijnne Lieutenant Generael den Baron van Uffelbach van de Victorie bevochten door  
den Generael Grave van Scharnbergh op het Legher van de Vyanden den 10. van de  
voortleeden Maendt.*

Source: Ghendtsche Post-tydinghen 15 January 1711. The advertising section is situated on the bottom of the page, next to the bold black line (included by us).

Figure 5. Advertising section in the newspaper of Ghent in 1800

Source: Gazette van Gent 23 January 1800. The advertising section is situated at the bottom of the page, next to the bold black line (included by us).

The evolution towards orderliness and easiness to consult and the use of purchasing arguments was also concluded by international researchers. It cannot be neglected though that the international advertising sections, such as in Great Britain and France, developed earlier. Examples are the research of Walsh (2000), Wischerman (2000), Gotti (2005), Coquery (2004), Görlach (2002) and Retat (2001). It was only in the 1820s that the advertising section in the newspaper of Ghent obtained the same characteristics as the international counterparts did in



the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was also concluded by Lyna & Vandamme for Antwerp (2009).

One question still open for discussion is what the determinants of the changing advertising section were. Lyna and Vandamme offer three possible explanations (2009). We will mention them shortly before suggesting a fourth. The first one holds that advertising in general was stimulated by the fall of the publishing costs of ads and of printing in general. Besides that, the authors believe that there was a high correlation with the upward economic conjuncture of the Southern Netherlands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As mentioned in the introduction, this period of growth started together with the Austrian government, so it is plausible that both are strongly related. A last possible explanation is a combination of both. Although the prices of printing were still high after the democratisation of the costs, investing in advertising would result in a better turnover compared with the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Local merchants could reach more potential customers by using ads as the improved transport infrastructure enabled more people to travel to the city (Lyna & Vandamme, 2009).

All these explanations seem plausible, so it is not our goal to disprove them. We do want to suggest a fourth possibility that could help in explaining the growth of the advertising section. As mentioned in the introduction, it is our belief that the rising advertising activity was strongly correlated with the development of the internationalisation of the most important harbour of the Southern Netherlands at the time.

### ***Impact of the shipping traffic***

We find a first indication of the impact of the maritime situation on the development of the advertising section in the goods that were advertised. Figures 6 and 7 show the evolution of the advertised consumables and durables throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For the consumable goods, there were eight categories that were advertised by commercial merchants in the newspapers of Ghent: tobacco, thee, coffee, cacao, wine, spirits, groceries and sugar. When one advertiser mentioned several variations of one product category, it was only counted as one (the variations of each category are discussed further on). For the durable goods, the goods were classified in eight categories: textiles, decoration, mirrors, porcelain, kitchenware, furniture and wallpaper.

Figure 6: Advertised durables in the Ghent newspapers

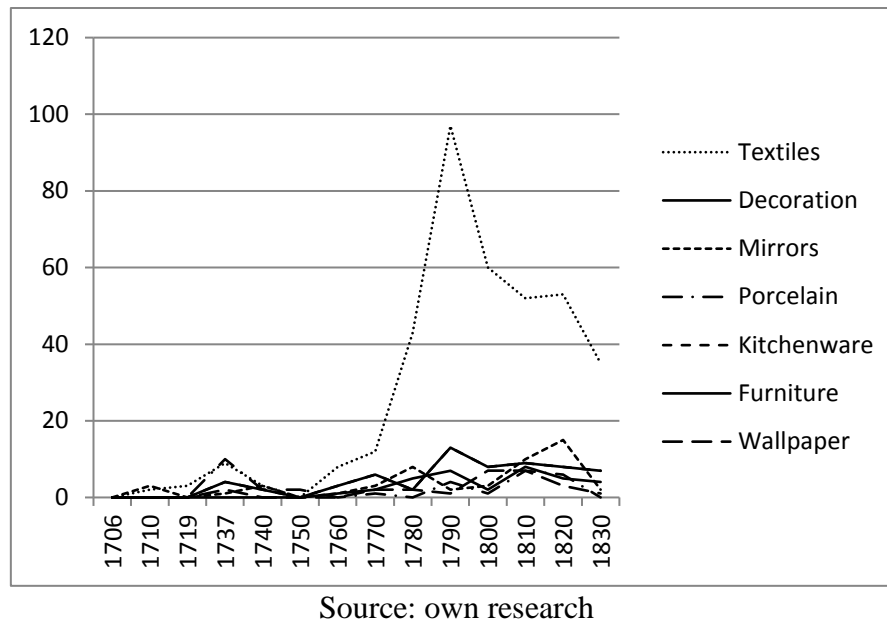
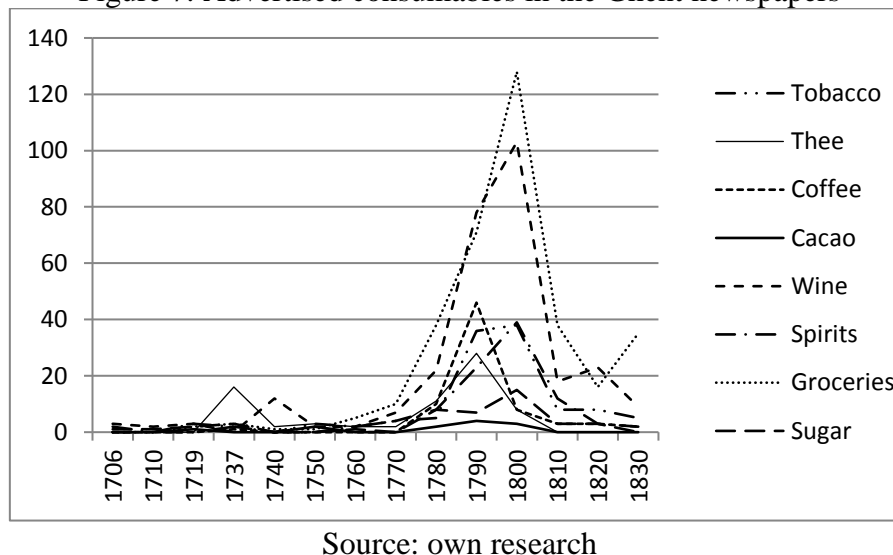


Figure 7: Advertised consumables in the Ghent newspapers



Both figures show a strong increase in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is striking that the categories most increasing were the ones of the colonial goods such as: textiles, wine, groceries, coffee and tobacco. Besides that, both graphs clearly indicate the impact of the Independency War from 1775 onwards. This might indicate the impact of the upswing of colonial trading partners during the Independency War (such as the Far East, Argentina and USA). Before that, there were only four important trading partners (England, Spain, France and the Netherlands). This evolution was confirmed by Farasyn, who stated that the amount of importers increased up to 14 in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Farasyn, 1998).

There were not only more merchants that used the advertising sections for a commercial purpose, all of them also mentioned more varied merchandises, as can be seen in table 1. This table shows the mentioned variations within each category for the different years. It is clear that more and more variations were advertised in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As such, there was not only an increase of ads within each category, all the categories also became more diversified.

Table 1: Product variations advertised

	1706	1710	1719	1737	1740	1750	1760	1770	1780	1790	1800
Durables											
Textiles	0	1	2	2	1	0	5	37	64	62	63
Decorations	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	8	7	6
Mirrors	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	9	8	8
Porcelain	0	0	0	6	4	5	0	3	0	17	15
Kitchenware	0	0	0	5	7	0	10	9	9	15	14
Furniture	0	0	0	5	6	0	10	12	11	18	17
Wallpaper	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	12	14	11	12
Consumables											
Tabaco	1	0	0	2	0	4	7	7	11	9	9
Thee	0	0	0	8	6	7	6	7	15	14	17
Coffee	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	7	7	5	7
Cacao	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	2
Whine	1	1	2	0	2	2	15	34	44	39	36
Spirits	0	0	2	2	0	0	3	7	9	8	9
Groceries	0	0	8	9	4	5	9	26	38	45	43
Sugar	1	2	2	1	0	0	1	3	2	2	3

Source: own research

As these figures and graphs indicate that the developing shipping traffic had an the impact on the advertising section, we will check what the relation between both variables was. Firstly, we carry out some OLS regressions in which we check the relation between the shipping traffic and the amount of ads. The results can be found in table 2. In the second regressions, the shipping traffic is replaced with import figures as a robustness check. The data were collected from our own research, the research of Coenen and the research of Farasyn (Farasyn, 1998; Coenen, 2013).

Table 2. Regression Advertisements to Shipping traffic and Imports

Regressions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Variables	Ads	Ads	Ads	Ads	Ads	Ads
Shipping traffic	0,24*** (0,03)					
Imports		0,42*** (0,07)				
L2.Shipping traffic			0,26*** (0,00584)			
L2.Imports				0,44*** (0,07)		
L5.Shipping traffic					0,26*** (0,03)	
L5.Imports						0,43*** (0,07)

Constant	126*** (33,11)	-168,27** (86,82)	132,94*** (30,51)	-162,60** (90,31)	165,81*** (30,19)	-118,64** (91,67)
Observations	45	33	45	33	45	33
R-squared	0,53	0,53	0,61	0,54	0,62	0,53

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1  
Standard errors in parentheses

Regressions 1 and 2 in table 2 show that shipping traffic and imports are statistically significant at a level of 1% in explaining the amount of ads. In a next step, we include lagged shipping traffic. This is justified by the intuition that local merchants did not immediately react to the changing shipping traffic. As shown in table 2, we opted for 2 and 5 years as lags. The coefficients of the regression with lagged variables are higher than the regression with contemporaneous variables and are still significant at a level of 1%. This is certainly the case for the lag of two years, so we can state with more certainty that merchants were triggered to advertise more, but that they needed a couple of years to adjust to the situation.

When lags are included, the coefficients and the R-squared values are higher. To check if there is a causal relation between both, we use a Granger-causality test. As explained in the methodology section, we analyse with this test whether the lagged values of one variable help in explaining the other one. The null hypothesis is that the one variable does not Granger-causes the other variable. We test this relationship for the shipping traffic on the amount of ads, on the amount of merchants that used the advertising press and on the amount of goods they advertised. As the test statistics are sensitive to the quantity of included lags, we first have to estimate what the optimal amount is. The Hannan-Quinn information criteria indicates that a lag of 2 years fits best for the amount of merchants and for the amount of ads and that a lag of 1 year fits best for the amount of advertised goods.

Table 3. Granger causality test

Causal direction <sup>2</sup>	S → A	A → S	S → M	M → S	S → G	G → S
F-value	5,46	1,80	4,03	1,46	5,83	0,58
Prob > F	0.008	0,18	0,04	0,25	0,02	0,45
S → A: the shipping traffic Granger-causes the amount of ads						
A → S: the amount of ads Granger-causes the shipping traffic						
S → M: the shipping traffic Granger-causes the amount of merchants						
M → S: the amount of merchants Granger-causes the shipping traffic						
S → G: the shipping traffic Granger-causes the amount of advertised goods						
G → S: the amount of advertised goods Granger-causes the shipping traffic						

<sup>2</sup> Notation according to: Gujarati D.N. (2003). Basis econometrics. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Table 3 shows the results of three Granger-causality tests. The figures in the first column ( $S \rightarrow A$ ) show if the shipping traffic causes the amount of advertisements. As the null hypothesis is rejected at a level of 1%, it is rejected that the shipping traffic had no impact on the amount of ads. The second column ( $A \rightarrow S$ ) shows that the null hypothesis for the opposite direction is not rejected. We repeat this analysis for shipping traffic and the amount of merchants and shipping traffic and the amount of advertised goods. As the results are similar, we can state with more certainty that the shipping traffic unidirectional had an influence on the development of the advertising section.

The combination of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of this article indicates that there indeed existed a causal relation between the maritime situation and the advertising section. Based on the available sources, it is not possible to propose a mechanism that can explain this causality. It is our intuition that the idea of Ann Coenen is plausible (2013). In her study, she stated that the new imports also had an impact on the retailing sector as it responded to the changing pattern of consumption. Customers responded to the new imported products and demanded a new range of colonial merchandises (that weren't on the markets before). This information can be combined with the fact that it were those newly imported goods that were the first ones that were widely advertised in the Ghent newspapers. In this point of view, it is plausible that the local merchants wanted to inform the potential customers about the new goods that could be sold in their shops. When this mechanism indeed occurred, this would mean that the causal relation between the shipping traffic and the developing advertising press was not a direct, but an indirect one. It would imply that the changed maritime situation influenced the consumptive behaviour, that in its turn influenced the advertising section. Of course, we cannot rule out that other mechanisms brought the causal relation between the shipping traffic and the changing advertising section. Further research is needed on this matter. We can state though that it is probable that the supply shocks, that occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century, played an important role in the development of the advertising section in the Southern Netherlands.

## Conclusion

Since Neill McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb published their article on the consumer revolution three decades ago, the evolution of advertising and early modern consumptive patterns became popular research topics. This resulted in a large amount of papers and articles that attested the changes of the promotional use of written media. As most studies were on the United Kingdom, France and the Dutch Republic, the Southern Netherlands were not well represented. This is striking, as there are indications that the evolution also occurred in this region. The only research on this topic was carried out by the Antwerp University and was mainly focussed on this city. By studying another important metropolis of the early modern Southern Netherlands, we wanted to contribute. Furthermore, we studied the link between the evolving maritime situation and the developments in the advertising section and consequently proposed a new determinant of the developing advertising section.

We used the three-daily chronicle of Ghent to provide an answer to two questions. The first one is: how developed the advertising section throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the manner of form, structure and contents? Based on these results, we formulate an answer to the second question: what was the role of the developing shipping traffic on the evolving advertising section? For the first part, we used a descriptive approach, while the second part was analysed with standard OLS-regressions and Granger-causality tests.

As an answer to the first question, it was shown that there was an increase of merchants that started to use advertisements. The amount of ads rose sharply after 1750. This was combined with a much larger and varied stock that was mentioned in the ads. At the same time, the quality of the merchandise was highlighted more and more and adjectives were used to inform the public about the beauty or the fashionability of the goods. The ads also changed in terms of formal characteristics. It became common habit to use bold and italic printed titles, names and addresses. As such, the advertising section developed into a medium that was characterised by orderliness and easiness to consult.

In the second part of this article, we identified the link between the development of the only international harbour of the Southern Netherlands at the time and the mentioned changes. This can be a complement to the already suggested determinants, such as the democratisation of printing and the economic growth in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The port of Ostend witnessed a booming shipping traffic that resulted in a much more varied and internationalised import after 1750. OLS regressions and Granger causality tests indicate that it is plausible that there existed a unidirectional causal relation between the maritime situation of the Southern Netherlands and the amount of ads, the amount of merchants in the advertising press and the amount of goods that were advertised. The combination of the qualitative and the quantitative analysis makes that we can state with more certainty that the internationalisation of the trade pattern had an impact on the development of the advertising section.

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